



Puget Sound Conservation Districts

BETTER GROUND

SMALL ACREAGE FARM SERVICES

WHO WE ARE

The twelve PSCDs are uniquely positioned to engage private land managers in land stewardship practices that address regional natural resource priorities. PSCDs are aligning core programs and services to recover the health of Puget Sound, and increasing capacity to deliver these programs and services across the region. Within the suite of core PSCD programs and services, the Small Acreage Farm Services Program provides a pathway to protect and enhance Puget Sound for current and future generations.

PSCDs are:

- Non-regulatory
- Community based and locally led
- Accessible
- Strategic
- Results driven and focused on shovel-ready projects
- Cost-effective

WHAT WE DO

- Work with private landowners and managers on a volunteer basis to improve the soils and waters of our region.
- Enable implementation of small farm best management practices and long-term sustainability by providing technical assistance and cost-share funding for projects.
- Provide regional outreach and education through the PSCD Better Ground initiative.
- Beta test Puget Sound-wide program pilots to test practices and approaches that address significant regional issues (ground water, air quality, nutrient management, etc.) and that can be used across the state.



OUR SERVICES

Our Small Acreage Farm Services Program focuses on the protection of Puget Sound. This program addresses the direct link between farm management and water and habitat quality. The program identifies and implements solutions for improving these resources.

HOW WE WORK

Our expert staff of farm planners, engineers, and others work hand-in-hand with landowners to identify ways in which habitat, water, soil, and other resources can be improved and protected. We tailor a suite of available tools to every client, ensuring that each landowner, no matter how large or small their property, gets the level of service that's right for them.

- **NRCS Standards and Best Available Science** – PSCDs have worked closely with landowners to develop Best Management Practices (BMPs) that have been tested by the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service. These standards are recognized across the United States, and commercial farmers can receive USDA financial assistance when implementing farm plans that meet them.
- **Special Purpose Small Farm Planning** – Special purpose farm planning services meet the standard of NRCS BMPs but are tailored to work more effectively for small farm needs and priorities.
- **Structural BMPs and Licensed Professional Engineering Support** – PSCDs partner with NRCS to design and implement structural BMPs. These practices are commonly designed to deliver a higher level of performance than what a private engineer would prescribe and often result in a streamlined permitting process.
- **Community Engagement and Strategic Communication** – PSCDs work together using social marketing and other effective tools to engage communities and support program participation.

FUNDING

PSCDs are nimble organizations in forming partnerships that can be funded through a variety of mechanisms:

- RCW enabled systems of Rates and Charges and Special Assessments
- State and federally funded grants and other monies
- Coordinated investments with local jurisdictions
- Strategic partnerships with philanthropic organizations
- Charitable donations through Title 26 USC (Internal Revenue Code) – Section 170(a)(1)

The following regional priorities have been identified by the Puget Sound Partnership and included in their Action Agenda and align with the PSCD Caucus' Small Farm Services:

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Expansion (NTA 2016-0073)

Expand the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program statewide by completing an assessment of rivers and streams to guide future grants, identify landowners' motivations to increase participation, identify additional funds required for incentives, and conduct a pilot project.

Monetizing Stewardship of Dairy Manure (NTA 2016-0244)

Determine conditions for a viable market for products derived from dairy manure produced in the Nooksack and Skagit watersheds to incentivize manure management practices that reduce their adverse impact on critical shellfish beds.

Puget Sound Clean Waters Livestock Stewardship Program (NTA 2016-0370)

Provide enhanced educational opportunities, technical assistance, and conservation planning tools, project designs, and financial assistance to livestock owners to prevent fecal coliform pollution.

Puget Sound Water Quality Trading Market Proof of Concept (NTA 2016-0404)

Build upon the Dept. of Ecology report on conservation markets and explore whether there are adequate buyers and sellers in Puget Sound watersheds for the potential implementation of a water quality trading program. Serve as a proof of concept for how to achieve Puget Sound recovery through an incentives approach.

For more info, contact Whidbey Island Conservation District, 888-678-4922, or www.whidbeycd.org

